

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 L-03 SY-05

MCT-01 SS-15 NSC-05 TRSE-00 /057 W

----- 097157

R 131110Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7629

IQFO RUSBKR/AMCONSUL KARACHI 6657

AMCONSUL LAHORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 9566

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, PK

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY

REF: STATE 212490

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SECURITY PRECAUTIONS IN PAKISTAN'S THREE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS (KARACHI, LAHORE, ISLAMABAD) HAS IMPROVED GREATLY OVER LAST TWO YEARS BUT WOULD STILL HAVE TO BE RATED AS UNSATISFACTORY. APPLICATION OF SECURITY RULES IS UNEVEN AND UNCOORDINATED AND CAN OFTEN BE CURCUMVENTED. THE PAK AUTHORITIES RECOGNIZE THIS AND TO HELP CORRECT THE SITUATION HAVE JUST ESTABLISHED A NEW FEDERAL AIRPORT SECURITY FORCE. THE SITUATION AT EACH OF THE THREE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS IS SUMMARIZED BELOW. PER REFTEL, EMBASSY HAS SENT DIP NOTE TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EMPHASIZING GENERAL USG CONCERN OVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY AND CONGEN KARACHI DISCUSSED SUBJECT WITH CIVAIR HEAD-QUARTERS OFFICIALS IN THAT CITY. END SUMMARY.

2. KARACHI SITUATION. SECURITY AT KARACHI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS MUDDLED AND CONFUSED. SECURITY MEASURES ARE APPLIED UNEVENLY AND FOR THE MOST PART

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COULD BE CIRCUMVENTED WITH RELATIVE EASE. HOWEVER, OVER

THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS, SINCE THE NOVEMBER 1975 EXPLOSION OF A BOMB AT THE AIRPORT, THE SECURITY SITUATION HAS IMPROVED MARKEDLY. THE BOMB MENTIONED ABOVE WAS IN A SUITCASE DESTINED FOR A FLIGHT GOING TO MUSCAT. IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE OF THE PROCEDURE REQUIRING PASSENGERS TO IDENTIFY LUGGAGE PRIOR TO LOADING IT ON BOARD THE AIRCRAFT THAT A MID-AIR EXPLOSION WAS AVOIDED. UNFORTUNATELY THIS PROCEDURE IS NO LONGER USED CONSISTENTLY AT KARACHI AIRPORT.

3. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR UNSCREENED PERSONS TO MINGLE WITH SCREENED PERSONS IN THE TRANSIT AREA AND IT IS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT A PROFESSIONAL TERRORIST SQUAD COULD MOUNT A SUCCESSFUL TERRORIST ATTACK THERE. HOWEVER, THE TRANSIT LOUNGE IS NOT HEAVILY USED BY PASSENGERS. THE MORE LIKELY TARGET AREAS ARE THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE AND THE ARRIVAL LOUNGE. IF TERRORISTS TARGETED ON THE TRANSIT LOUNGE, THEY WOULD NO DOUBT APPROACH IT FROM THE APRON. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO GAIN ACCESS TO IT THROUGH THE TERMINAL.

4. THE MONTH OF AUGUST HAS BEEN A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD. THE FEDERAL SECURITY FORCE (FSF) HAS BEEN IN THE PROCESS OF RELINQUISHING RESPONSIBILITY FOR AIRPORT SECURITY TO THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED FEDERAL AIRPORT SECURITY FORCE (FASF). THE NEW FASF LOOKS MORE PROFESSIONAL THAN THE

FSF AND GIVES EVERY INDICATION THAT WITH EXPERIENCE, THEY CAN BE MORE COMPETENT THAN THOSE THEY REPLACED. ALSO THE CHANGE REFLECTS A GENUINE EFFORT BY PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES TO IMPROVE A SITUATION THEY RECOGNIZE TO BE UNSATISFACTORY.

5. THE PROBLEMS THEY FACE IN THIS EFFORT ARE MANY AND DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES EASILY TO SHORT TERM SOLUTIONS. THE AIRPORT IS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF CONSTRUCTION. THIS, IN ADDITION TO THE LARGE CROWDS WHICH CONGREGATE IN AND AROUND THE BUILDINGS, MAKES FOR CONFUSION ON A GRAND SCALE. THERE IS A CONSTANT STREAM OF EMPLOYEES, POLICE AND OTHER AIRPORT PERSONNEL ON THE MOVE AT ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIMES. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT EVEN FOR A WELL-TRAINED, EXPERIENCED SECURITY ORGANIZATION TO PUT DISCIPLINE AND ORDER INTO THIS CHAOS.

6. ANOTHER FACTOR, WHICH CREATES PROBLEMS IS THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY. AT KARACHI AIRPORT THERE ARE FOUR SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS PLAYING A ROLE:

(A) THE FASF IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE AIRPORT FACILITY. IT IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION AND ULTIMATELY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. IT IS STAFFED BY SECONDED MILITARY OFFICERS AND IS PARA-MILITARY IN ORIENTATION.

(B) THE PIA SECURITY DEPARTMENT RETAINS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SECURITY OF THOSE AREAS WHICH ARE UNIQUE TO THE OPERATIONS OF THE AIRLINE SUCH AS MAINTENANCE FACILITIES, GROUND CARGO HANDLING AND STORAGE AREAS, ETC. THE PIA SECURITY SECTION IS STAFFED BY EX-INTELLIGENCE BUREAU POLICE PERSONNEL, THE MOST SENIOR OF WHOM ARE IN WHAT THEY CONSIDER THEIR PRE-RETIREMENT POST. THESE PEOPLE TEND TO BE MARKEDLY LESS PUNCTILIOUS IN THE EXECUTION OF THEIR DUTIES.

(C) THE FEDERAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (FIA) HANDLES IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES, AND MAY WELL HAVE OTHER UNSPECIFIED SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE FUNCTIONS AT THE AIRPORT. THIS ORGANIZATION COMES DIRECTLY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

(D) THE FOURTH ORGANIZATION IS CUSTOMS. THEY HANDLE THEIR TRADITIONAL TASKS AND ARE PROBABLY THE MOST LAX OF THE FOUR ORGANIZATIONS. LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY AMONG THESE ORGANIZATIONS ARE FUZZY AND COORDINATION IS POOR AT BEST. THIS RESULTS IN HIGHLY UNEVEN APPLICATION OF SECURITY CONTROL IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE AIRPORT.

7. THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS;

(A) AT THE AIRLINE CHECK-IN COUNTER, AND AT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEALTH AND IMMIGRATION CHECKPOINTS THERE IS NO DEFINED SYSTEM FOR PROCESSING.

(B) LUGGAGE IS MOVED BY AN ARMY OF PORTERS AND AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME THERE SEEMS TO BE A VERY LARGE

NUMBER OF PEOPLE AIMLESSLY MILLING THROUGH THE DEPARTURE AREA.

(C) ONCE TICKET AND EMIGRATION PROCESSING IS COMPLETED PASSENGERS ARE HERDED TO A SECURITY CHECKPOINT. THERE CURSORY CHECKS OF HAND BAGGAGE (WHICH ABOUNDS) ARE CONDUCTED AS WELL AS CURSORY PHYSICAL SEARCHES. WOMEN

ARE FREQUENTLY NOT SEARCHED. ONCE A PASSENGER PASSES

THROUGH THIS CONTROL NO FURTHER CHECKS ARE MADE OF HIM
BUT AIRLINE AND AIRPORT PERSONNEL MOVE WITH COMPLETE
FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE AREA WITHOUT BEING CHECKED.

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(D) THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE AIRPORT IS NOT
CONDUCTIVE TO GOOD SECURITY PROCEDURES. THE TRAFFIC
PATTERNS ARE CONFUSED AND CONFUSING; PHYSICAL BARRIERS
WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL GENERALLY DO NOT EXIST.

(E) PASSENGER BAGGAGE AND AIR CARGO ARE NOT X-RAYED
AND THOROUGH PERSONAL PHYSICAL SEARCHES ARE NOT CONDUCTED.
THE PROCEDURE OF HAVING PASSENGERS IDENTIFY THEIR LUGGAGE
PRIOR TO LOADING HAS MORE OR LESS CEASED, AND AS
PREVIOUSLY STATED, CONTROL IN BAGGAGE/CARGO STORAGE AREAS
IS ONE OF THE WEAKEST ASPECTS OF THE SECURITY SYSTEM.

8. IN SUMMARY CONGEN KARACHI'S JUDGMENT IS THAT IT WOULD BE
RELATIVELY EASY FOR A WELL-TRAINED TERRORIST GROUP,
SUCH AS THE JAPANESE RED ARMY, TO MOUNT A TERRORIST
OPERATION AT KARACHI AIRPORT.

9. LAHORE SITUATION: LAHORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
APPEARS TO HAVE TWO STANDARDS OF SECURITY. THE TOUGHER
STANDAR, THOUGH STILL INADEQUATE, APPLIES TO FLIGHTS

FOR KARACHI AND INDIA, A SOFTER STANDARD FOR DOMESTIC FOKKER F-27 SLIGHTS. FOR THE FORMER, SECURITY INVOLVES MORE MANPOWER, TOUGHER INSPECTION OF CARRY-ON LUGGAGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND FRISKING. THE LATTER SELDOM RECEIVE MORE THAN A CURSORY EXAMINATION OF EFFECTS AND, VERY OFTEN, NO FRISKING. IN EITHER CASE, WESTERNERS TEND TO BE LESS STRICTLY CHECKED.

10. LAHORE HAS NO TRANSIT AREAS PER SE. PASSENGERS UTILIZE THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE, ACCESS TO WHICH REQUIRES A PHYSICAL SEARCH. PASSENGERS IN TRANSIT ARE NOT SEARCHED, BUT IF THEY LEAVE THE LUNGE AREA, THEY MUST AGAIN BE CHECKED.

11. ACCESS TO PARKED AIRCRAFT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN, AND QUITE OFTEN DURING DEPARTURES OF LARGE FLIGHTS THERE IS A CROWD OF PEOPLE AT FOOT OF AIRCRAFT STEPS SAYING FAREWELLS.

12. AIRPORT GUARDS ARE AROUND WITH AN ASSORTMENT OF WEAPONS, USUALLY ENFIELD RIFLES AND AK-47S. (LEVEL OF TRAINING UNKNOWN). THERE IS A SIZABLE FORCE OF PLAINCLOTHES MEN. VERY FEW GUARDS SPEAK ENGLISH AND, THEREFORE, ARE RELUCTANT TO ADDRESS FOREIGNERS.

13. IN SUM, WHILE MANPOWER FOR SECURITY IS ABUNDANT, ADEQUACY OF PROCEDURES, CONCENTRATION ON EFFORT AND ABILITY TO REACT ARE LOW. BY US SECURITY STANDARDS, LAHORE AIRPORT LEAVES A LOT TO BE DESIRED.

14. SITUATION IN ISLAMABAD. THE SITUATIONSAT THIS AIRPORT IS SIMILAR TO THAT DESCRIBED IN KARACHI AND LAHORE. HORDES OF PEOPLE ALWAYS SEEM TO BE ROAMING AROUND AIMLESSLY; MYRIAD OTHERS ARE SEEING PEOPLE OFF OR WAITING FOR INCOMING PASSENGERS. CONSTRUCTION WORK IS ALWAYS GOING ON ADDING TOSHE CONFUSION. THERE SEEMS TO BE AN INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF PRESUMABLY OFFICIALLY CONNECTED PERSONNEL WHO CAN BE SEEN WALKING THROUGH THE CHECKPOINTS INTO THE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE LOUNGES OR ONTO THE APRON. SECURITY PERSONNEL ARE MUCH IN EVIDENCE BUT ONE OFTEN WONDERS HOW EFFECTIVE THE CONTROLS REALLY ARE. PASSENGER HAND LUGGAGE IS SEARCHED AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE AND PASSENGERS THEMSELVES ARE GIVEN AN X-RAY CHECK AND CURSORY PERSONAL CHECK. WOMEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARE USUALLY NOT SUBJECTED TO ANY PERSONAL SEARCH OTHER THAN PASSING UNDER AN X-RAY MONITOR.

15. THERE IS NO SEPARATE TRANSIT LUUNGE AS SUCH. TRANSITING PASSENGERS ARRIVING FROM EUROPE OR PEKING HAVE TO GO THROUGH CUSTOMS AND THEN MUST CHECK BACK IN FOR A CONNECTING DOMESTIC FLIGHT LIKE ANY OTHER LOCAL PASSENGER. THUS THEY WOULD GET THE ABOVE DESCRIBED SEARCH UPON ENTERING THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE. TRANSITING PASSENGERS FROM INTERNAL FLIGHTS CAN WALK DIRECTLY FROM THEIR PLANE INTO THE SAME DEPARTURE LOUNGE WITHOUT GOING THROUGH A SECURITY CHECK, THE PRESUMPTION BEING THAT THEY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO A PERSONAL SECURITY CHECK AT THEIR DOMESTIC POINT OF AIRPORT ORIGIN.

16. A WEAK POINT IN ISLAMABAD IS THE MATTER OF ACCESS TO THE VIP LOUNGE. TIGHTNESS OF CONTROL AT THE DOOR IS VARIABLE. THEORETICALLY, ONLY VERY GOP OFFICIALS AND AMBASSADORS MAY ENTER IT. OTHERS CAN ONLY ENTER UPON PRESENTATION OF SPECIAL PASSES. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, LOWER LEVEL DIPLOMATS CAN OFTEN BLUFF THEIR WAY IN AND THE SAME APPLIES TO IMPORTANT-LOOKING PAKISTANIS WITH FLUNKIES FOLLOWING BEHIND CARRYING THEIR BRIEFCASES. ONCE IN THE VIP LUNGE, PERSONS APPEARING AS PASSENGERS CAN WALK WITH KAMplete FREEDOM ONTO THE TARMAC TO PLANES OR BACK INTO THE DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL LOUNGES.

17. THE ONLY TERRORIST INCIDENT IN RECENT MEMORY AT ISLAMABAD OCCURED IN JULY 1975 WHEN AN EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN THE CABIN OF A PARKED PIA BOEING 707. NO ONE WAS INJURED. MUCH OF THE IMPROVED SECURITY AT ISLAMABAD, SUCH AS THERE IS, HAS OCCURRED SINCE THAT EVENT.

18. IN SUM, SECURITY AT ISLAMABAD IS PROBABLY ADEQUATE TO DETER ANY UNSOPHISTICATED TERRORIST. IT IS PROBABLY INADEQUATE TO DETER A DETERMINED GROUP, USING FEMALES, WHICH HAS CAREFULLY CASED THE AIRPORT, PARTICULARLY THE VIP LOUNGE.

19. THIS MESSAGE INCLUDES EXTENSIVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONGENS KARACHI AND LAHORE.
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Message Attributes

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